WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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- 1. A unitary membrane for use in a pressing apparatus, comprising:
- a pair of longitudinal edge portions; and
- a semipermeable portion having a plurality of intercommunicating pores, said semipermeable portion being positioned between said pair of longitudinal edge portions,

wherein said unitary membrane comprises a formed fabric, said unitary membrane having a thickness less than about 0.1 inches, and wherein said semipermeable portion has a permeability greater than zero and less than about five CFM per square foot as measured by TAPPI test method TIP 0404-20.

- 2. The unitary membrane of claim 1, wherein said semipermeable portion has a permeability greater than zero and less than about two CFM per square foot as measured by TAPPI test method TIP 0404-20.
- 3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said permeability is determined by at least one of a size, a shape, a frequency and a pattern of a plurality of pores in said semipermeable portion.
- 4. The unitary membrane of claim 1, wherein said pair of longitudinal edge portions are tapered such that a cross-section of said unitary membrane has a trapezoidal shape.
- 5. The unitary membrane of claim 1, wherein said pair of longitudinal edge portions are impermeable.
- 6. The unitary membrane of claim 1, wherein said formed fabric forms a flow resistance layer near a surface of said unitary membrane.
- 7. The unitary membrane of claim 6, wherein said unitary membrane further comprises a fluid distribution layer adjacent said flow resistance layer.

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- 8. The unitary membrane of claim 1, further comprising a surface which is abrasion resistant.
- 9. The unitary membrane of claim 1, wherein said semipermeable portion has a void percentage of less than 40 percent.
- 10. A method of making a unitary membrane for use in a pressing apparatus, comprising the steps of:

providing a carrier fabric which is very permeable; and forming a plurality of intercommunicating pores in said carrier fabric.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said forming step further comprises the steps of: blending heat fusible and non-heat fusible fibers; needling the blend of fibers into said carrier fabric; and

applying heat to melt said heat fusible fibers, which leave voids in the form of intercommunicating pores.

- 12. The method of claim 11, wherein said needling step further comprises the step of applying said blend of fibers into said fabric carrier near a surface thereof to form a flow resistance layer near the surface of said unitary membrane.
- 13. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of defining a flow distribution layer in said unitary membrane which distributes a fluid flow received from said resistance layer.
- 14. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step forming a pair of impermeable longitudinal edge portions.
 - 15. The method of claim 10, wherein said forming step comprises the steps of: forming a resistance layer; and forming a fluid distribution layer.

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- 16. The method of claim 10, wherein said forming step further comprises the step of successively applying a coating to said carrier fabric until the desired permeability is reached.
- 17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of varying the coating type to adjust said permeability.
- 18. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of entraining air into said coating to adjust said permeability.
- 19. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of adjusting the solids content of said coating to adjust said permeability.

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